

Amendments to the Claims:

The listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1.-3. (Canceled)

4. (Currently Amended) A method for operating a four-stroke internal combustion engine, comprising:

injecting fuel directly into at least one combustion chamber of the internal combustion engine, the volume of which changes cyclically,

supplying fresh gas through at least one intake valve and discharging combustion exhaust gas through at least one exhaust valve,

at part-load, forming a lean base mix of air, fuel and retained exhaust gas, and at full load forming a stoichiometric mix, and

having compression ignition take place at part-load and spark ignition take place at full load, wherein within the part-load range in the event of a change in load state, the theoretical shift in the combustion position occurring in the at least one combustion chamber during compression ignition is compensated by the shift in phase position of at least one of an in-take intake and exhaust phase.

5. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 4, wherein, within the part-load range when a load state changes, the combustion is shifted

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in the early direction by adjusting the exhaust phase in the early direction, with the exhaust valve being opened.

6. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 4, wherein, within the part-load range when load state stages, the combustion is shifted in the early direction by the intake phase being adjusted in the late direction, with the intake valve being opened later.

7. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 6, wherein, within the part-load range when a load state changes, the combustion is shifted in the early direction by adjusting the exhaust phase in the early direction, with the exhaust valve being opened.